

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

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SUBJECT: OPERATION SAHEL

1. I URGE WE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF APRIL 22 CONFERENCE IN ROME
ON SAHELIAN DROUGHT TO ANNOUNCE US WILLINGNESS UNDERTAKE
LONGER RANGE PROGRAM TO SAHELIAN COUNTRIES SOMEWHAT ALONG LINES
OF EARLIER PROPOSED OPERATION SAHEL. PRESENT MOMENT OF SUFFERING
FROM DROUGHT MAKES THIS PARTICULARLY GOOD PSYCHOLOGICAL TIME
TO MAKE SUCH ANNOUNCEMENT. STATEMENT SHOULD, WE BELIEVE, FOCUS
PARTICULARLY ON EFFORTS TO ALLEVIATE EFFECTS OF FUTURE
DROUGHTS. HOWEVER, IT SHOULD ALSO INDICATE BROADER PURPOSE,
INCLUDING EXPRESSION OF WILLINGNESS EXAMINE WHAT SHOULD BE
DONE RE LIVESTOCK, GRAIN PRODUCTION, MINERALOGY AND METEOR-
OLOGY, ALL SUBJECTS TO WHICH WE CAN MAKE OR ARE ALREADY MAKING
CONTRIBUTIONS. WE SEE ADVANTAGE IN PEGGING OUR EFFORT PRIMARLY
TO STUDY AND RELIEF OF SAHEL' S RECURRENT DROUGHT CONDITION
RATHER THAN TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BECAUSE LATTER TENDS
TO DISCOURAGE EXPECTATIONS THAT US WILL FINANCE LARGE AND
EXPENSIVE PROJECTS.

2. SAHELIAN COUNTRIES WANT FROM US THINGS THAT WE FORTUNATELY
BEST PREPARED TO GIVE, I. E., RESULTS OF YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
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IN DRY LANDS IN OUR WESTERN STATES PLUS APPLICATION NEWEST
IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WHICH COULD BE USED TO ATTACK
THESE PROBLEMS. GOOD CASE IN POINT IS USE OF SATELLITE
PHOTOGRAPHY TO STUDY DROUGHT. AT MEETING IN ROME, SPECIAL
POINT SHOULD MADE OF FACT THAT NASA RECENTLY TURNED ON ERTS-1
CAMERA OVER DROUGHT AREAS IN ORDER TO ASSURE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF
IMAGES THIS AREA DURING THIS DIFFICULT PERIOD, AND COMPARATIVE
STUDIES OF THESE IMAGES SHOULD BE PARTICULARLY VALUABLE. WE
WILL GIVE DEPT SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ON ERTS COOPERATION
RE DROUGHT IN SEPARATE MESSAGE.

3. IF IT IS DECIDED TO MAKE MAJOR STATEMENT ON ASSISTANCE
TO SAHELIAN COUNTRIES AND PARTICULARLY IF IT IS DECIDED TO ANNOUNCE
ANY MAJOR FINANCIAL AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION TO SAHELIAN COUNTRIES
AT THAT MEETING, SUGGEST SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO
ALLOWING US AMBASSADORS IN SAHELIAN COUNTRIES TO INFORM
GOVERNMENTS OF WHAT WE PLAN TO PROPOSE OR TO GIVE PRIOR TO
CONFERENCE. MALI ALWAYS HAS STRONG DOUBTS ABOUT COORDINATION IN
EUROPE OF EFFORTS TO HELP MALI OR EVEN THE SAHEL AS A WHOLE,
PARTICULARLY IF THEY NOT REPRESENTED. MALIANS CONSIDER THEMSELVES
FULLY CAPABLE OF ANY COORDINATION NECESSARY. ALTHOUGH THIS
NOT ENTIRELY REALISTIC ATTITUDE, IT EXISTS AND COULD BE MET
BY TAKING MALIAN GOVERNMENT INTO CONFIDENCE ABOUT OUR
THINKING AND PLANNING PRIOR TO ROME CONFERENCE.
BLAKE

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